

History of Old Stone Mill

Short Version



Delta Mill Society Newsletter

History Series

by

Ken W. Watson

The Rocky Early Years of the Old Stone Mill

The Old Stone Mill is a survivor of a bygone era. While most mills that were once prevalent throughout this region are now simply ruins on the landscape, a reference on an old map or just a fading memory, the Old Stone Mill stands fully intact, cared for and interpreted to the public. Part of the reason was the success of the mill during its operating life. That it survived as a commercial success though to the mid-20th century is a testament to some of its owners. But it had a few close calls along the way, particularly in its early years.

On June 10, 1808, Abel Stevens sold his mills (sawmill and grist mill) and property north of those mills to William Jones for the sum of £375. Jones came from a prominent family, his father, Ephraim, was a large landholder and his brothers were all very successful. William was born in Verchères, Québec (on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, just downstream of Montreal) in 1782 and named Guillaume, which is the French form of the name William. His mother, Charlotte Coursolles, was from Verchères. In 1788 his family moved from Montreal to the newly created Lunenburg District of Québec (essentially what is now eastern Ontario) and in 1790 his father Ephraim received a large land grant in Augusta Township.

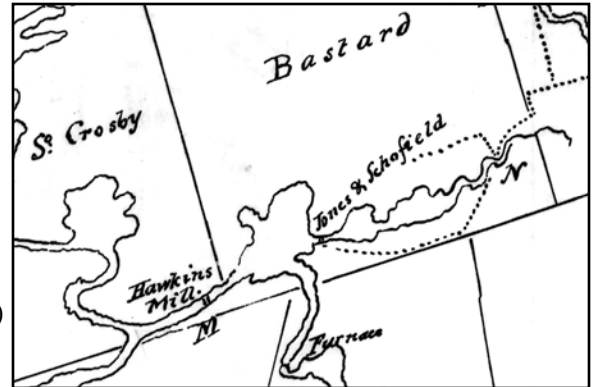
It's unclear exactly when William moved to Delta. He was involved at Lyndhurst with his father, Ephraim, who acquired a partial interest in the land and ironworks there. In 1804, William Jones is shown as being half owner of the sawmill at Lyndhurst purchased by his father that year. So he was in the region and would have been familiar with Abel Stevens' operations in Delta. William is in Delta by 1807 since he's shown as running a still in Delta that year. At some point Jones hooked up with Ira Schofield (b.1776) as a business partner. Ira Schofield was a witness to the 1808 sale of Stevens' mills and property to William Jones. At that time, Stevens' grist mill was under lease to Nicholas Mattice. Stevens also sold some of his property south of his mills to Mattice for £100. Ira Schofield was also a witness that agreement done on the same day as Stevens' sale to Jones.

It appears that Mattice continued milling that year in Stevens' former grist mill, now owned by William Jones. Jones that year is shown as operating a 168 gallon still and Abel Stevens is shown as operating a 70 gallon still. While stills are often associated with grist mills (access to the needed grain), we see at other sites (ie. Chaffeys) that they are often set up in a separate building. In 1805, assessment records show Abel Stevens operating a 70 gallon still, presumably the same one he was later operating in 1808. William Jones was assessed for a 150 gallon still in 1807 and for a 168 gallon still in 1808.

In 1809, Ira Schofield is shown as operating a grist mill, which would have been Stevens' old grist mill, now owned by William Jones, and also a 168 gallon still, presumably Jones' still. Abel Stevens is also milling, now at his son's (Abel Stevens Jr.) newly constructed grist mill at the north end of town on today's Cowans Creek. Stevens is also shown that year as operating a 76 gallon still. William appears to be in Lyndhurst that year operating the grist mill there.

Anecdotal stories have Stevens' old grist mill burning down, likely in the latter part of 1809. In 1810 we see Jones and Schofield operating a merchant shop, storehouse and sawmill in Delta, there is no mention of a grist mill. We don't know if the burning down of Stevens' old grist mill sparked Jones' to build a new mill, or whether that was the plan all along when he purchased Stevens' land in 1808. Construction of the Old Stone Mill started in the spring of 1810.

The building of the Old Stone Mill was a mammoth undertaking. It was purpose built as a merchant mill (a mill that bought grain and produced flour for sale) using the patented design of American inventor Oliver Evans. Evans revolutionized the flour industry in the late 1700s with his design for an automatic mill described at the time as an "Improved Merchant Flour Mill". In 1790 for instance, George Washington (U.S. president), hired Evans to convert his



Early Map Reference

This 1815 map shows "Jones and Schofield", the operators of the grist mill in Delta. "Hawkins Mill" is Haskins mill (a sawmill) at White Fish Falls (Morton). Furnace at that time was the burned out remains of the former furnace and foundry in that location (Lyndhurst).

mills at Mt. Vernon to Evans' new process. In 1795 Evans wrote a book detailing his process and it became the bible for how grist mills were to be built. His book was re-printed 15 times through to the mid-1800s.

We don't (yet) know the name of the millwright who built the Old Stone Mill, but he was clearly highly skilled. He was obviously very familiar with the Oliver Evans process and he designed and built a spectacular example of an Oliver Evans mill. Contrary to prior belief, the Old Stone Mill is not a rebuild of the Abel Stevens grist mill, it's not even close to the same location. Stevens original mills were in the stream valley at the foot of the rapids coming out of Upper Beverley Lake (originally two smaller lakes). His mills were likely built on glacial deposits (till or bedded clay) as recently revealed in the "big dig" behind the Jubilee block. But a big stone building needs bedrock support and the closest surface bedrock was to the north of Stevens' original mills. Accordingly the Old Stone Mill was located about 50m away from where Stevens' grist mill had been located. A new channel from Upper Beverley Lake was constructed, excavated through the bedrock using pry bars and black powder blasting. The sounds of construction rang out in Delta through 1810 and 1811.

This mill seems to have done fine in its early years. In 1812, the year that war broke out with the United States, we see Ira Schofield operating the mill with 2 runs of stones. He's also operating a sawmill (newly built) and a merchant shop. Jones got married that year and joined the militia (as did Schofield). From 1813 to 1815 we see the mill operated jointly by Jones and Schofield. In 1816 it's just William Jones and in 1817 it's back to Jones and Schofield.



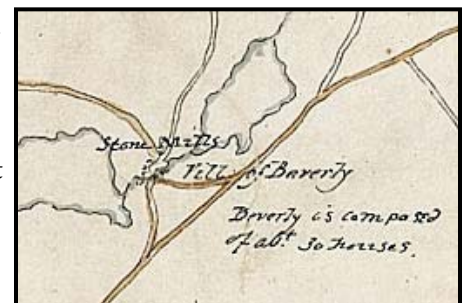
William

The front door of the mill is original to the 1810 mill. On the inside, above the upper hinge is the name "William", assumed to be William Jones. It is followed by appears to be an ampersand and then blank. Was "William & Ira" originally written here, with Ira removed after he left Delta?

In this township [Bastard] is the village of Stone Mills: the mill here, belonging to W. Jones, Esq. is unquestionably the best building of the kind in Upper Canada. Quote by Rev. William Smart, 1817—in Statistical Account of Upper Canada, 1822.

In 1818 Ira Schofield left Delta and his brother, James Schofield Jr., took over as miller. He is shown as the miller and as the operator of the sawmill for 1818 and 1819. However, it appears that things were not going well for the mill at that time. In 1819, William took out a mortgage on the mill for £1,358 from his brothers Charles and Jonas Jones, both successful businessmen. From 1820 to 1825 we only see William Jones as the miller. In 1826, for reasons unknown, the mill doesn't operate. There are some indications that William may have moved to Brockville at that time and was trying to lease out the mill. He'd obtained the job of customs collector for Brockville. In 1827 and 1828 it is being operated under lease by J.K. Hartwell and his partner James L. Schofield, Ira's son (b. 1800). As an aside, Joseph Harwell briefly employed a young (16 year old) Walter H. Denaut as a clerk in his general store in about 1823. Walter Denaut, who subsequently left Delta for greener pastures, would later return to Delta and feature prominently in the fortunes of the Old Stone Mill.

It's unclear if the mill operated in 1829. It didn't operate in 1830 or 1831. William died in Brockville in November 1831. William and Amelia had a daughter in 1828, but she died in 1829, so he had no heirs. William didn't leave a will and, likely due to the mortgage, the mill ended up in the hands of his



Delta in 1816 and 1828

Top is a section from an 1816 map showing the buildings in Delta. Bottom is a section from a map dated 22 June 1828, showing that the name had changed by this time to Beverley and noting that it consists of about 30 houses. In 1857 the name was again changed, this time to Delta. 1816 map by Joshua Jebb, RE and 1828 map by J. Walpole, RE. Both maps from Library and Archives Canada, NMC 21941 (Jebb) and NMC 11230 (Walpole)

DESIRABLE INVESTMENT.

WILL BE SOLD, on Tuesday 17th Nov next, at 7 o'clock P. M. at the **COMMERCIAL HOTEL**, in Brockville, at **PUBLIC AUCTION**, that valuable and well known property situated in Beverly, and known as the **STONE MILLS**, and the Farm adjoining, owned and occupied by the late William Jones Esq.—The Mills consist of a Stone Grist Mill, 60 by 46 feet, three stories high, with one run of Stones in operation, and sufficient room to place one or two run more;—a large wooden building in which there is a Saw Mill, a Mill for cutting, and polishing marble, and a Carding Machine;—with the Mill Yard and out Buildings; the last mentioned Mills are rented at £50 per annum, the lease expires on 5th March 1837; the Grist Mill is not at present leased or occupied;—The Farm is laid out in Village and Park Lots; several of the half-acre Lots have been sold at £25 per Lot;—There is a Stone Dwelling House, Barn, Stable, Wood-House &c. The Mills with Yard and out-buildings will be put up and sold separate from the Farm—the Farm with House &c. will be put up and sold together, or in separate parcels as intending purchasers may require.—A plan of the Farm as laid out into Village and Park Lots will be exhibited at the time of Sale, or may previously be seen by applying to the subscriber or at the Post Office in Beverly.—There will also be offered for Sale at the same time and place, the South-East half of Lot No. 28 in 10th Con. of Bastard, containing 100 acres, also the one Equal half of Lot No. 23 in said Concession containing 100 acres, being the lot of land late in the possession of E. Watson, and on which he made a Clearing; also a part of Lot No. 25 in aforesaid Concession of Bastard, containing about 10 acres, also South-East quarter of Lot No. 2 in 4th Con. of Leeds containing 50 acres, a part being under improvement, with a good Log House.—The terms of the sale of the Mills and Farm in Beverly will be cash or approved Endorsed Notes at 90 days, payable at the Bank (adding interest) the terms of sale of the other property will be made known at the time of sale.—As soon as a lock is completed at the white-fish falls, which is in contemplation, the above property, in Beverly, will be, from its position, the most valuable of any in the back Country as the navigation will then be completed from the Mill to Montreal or Kingston via the Rideau Canal.
HENRY JONES.
Brockville, Sept. 17th 1835. 30

1835 Notice of Auction

The sale included the grist mill and sawmill. The Old Stone mill is described as being 60' x 40' in size—a slight exaggeration from its actual 50' x 35' size.

brother, Charles Jones. Charles sold the mill to William's widow, Amelia, for four shillings. Amelia then sold the mill to Henry Jones (William's cousin) who leased it to Edward Matson from 1832 to 1834. Grain prices crashed in 1834, a likely reason why Matson severed the lease in the fall of that year. Henry Jones put up a "for rent" ad in 1834 (no takers) and then in 1835 he put the mill and sawmill up for sale.

There were no takers in 1835, but in July of 1836, James and Amelia Macdonell purchased the mill from Henry Jones for £500. Amelia was the widow of William Jones and she had originally sold the mill to Henry for £500. She married James (a 6th cousin) in October 1835. They took a mortgage for £500 in order to purchase the mill. They put some work into the mill including adding another run of millstones (to total 3 sets) and the mill resumed operating in 1837. By 1839, they were back to 2 sets of millstones and in 1840 they took out another mortgage on the mill and sometime later, took out a third mortgage. James died in August 1847 and in 1848 and 1849, his widow Amelia is shown as operating the mill. The mill didn't appear to make a profit through the Macdonell's ownership, in fact they never paid off any of the three mortgages they'd taken out on mill in order to keep the business afloat.

The story of the Old Stone Mill could have ended there; an old grist mill, unable to make a profit and burdened by debt. However, the mill's fortunes were about to take a dramatic turn. An entrepreneur by the name of Walter Henderson Denaut, who moved to Delta in 1849, purchased the mill in February 1850, paying off the three mortgages the Macdonell's had taken out. Denaut had a vision for the mill and he was about to implement it. But that's a story for another newsletter.



Ira Schofield

Ira is buried in the Denny Cemetery just east of Philipsville. Two of his brothers (James & Peter) and his father (James) are also buried here. Ira's obituary stated that he was a "most zealous freemason" and the freemason symbol adorns the top of his headstone.

William Jones' burial location has not been found. His parents and two of his brothers are in the Blue Church Cemetery (between Brockville and Prescott) but William is not listed as being there.

James Macdonell is shown as being buried in the Sandy Hill Cemetery (Prescott) although there is no known headstone. Amelia's resting place is unknown.

- Ken Watson

MEMBERSHIP

For those reading this who do not have a membership in the Delta Mill Society, please consider one. Our primary support for the work we do in protecting and presenting the Old Stone Mill, as well as the Old Town Hall and the Blacksmith Shop, comes from memberships and donations. A membership form can be found on our website at: www.deltamill.org/donation.html (or just click on the **Donate** menu selection on our home page)



History of the Mill Part 2 – The Denaut Era

Ed Note: See the Fall/Winter 2023 Newsletter (on our website) for part 1 of the story of the mill (up to 1850).

In 1850 the Old Stone Mill was essentially bankrupt. The previous owners, James and Amelia Macdonell struggled and now with James gone (d.1847), James' son Alexander and Amelia were still struggling, unable to pay off the debts the mill had accumulated. The mill was carrying three mortgages and not making a profit. On James' death, the mill went to his son, Alexander, who made Amelia the owner of record until the mill could be sold. In February of 1850 it was sold to a resident of Beverley (Delta), Walter Henderson Denaut, a wealthy landowner and entrepreneur.

Walter Denaut was born on September 10, 1807 in Edwardsburgh Township. When Walter was 16 (1824), he worked in the general store in Stone Mills (Delta) run by J.K. Harwell and James L. Schofield. He would have known William Jones, owner and operator of the Old Stone Mill at that time. We next see Denaut in Brockville working for William's cousins, Henry and Sidney Jones, owner of H & S Jones, a shipping company. Henry would later become the owner of the Old Stone Mill (1832 to 1836). Denaut also took on the job of deputy collector of customs for William Jones, who was the Collector of Customs for Brockville until his death 1831.

Walter clearly remained in Brockville subsequent to Jones' death, since in 1832, we see Walter H. Denaut charged in Brockville, along with four other men, with

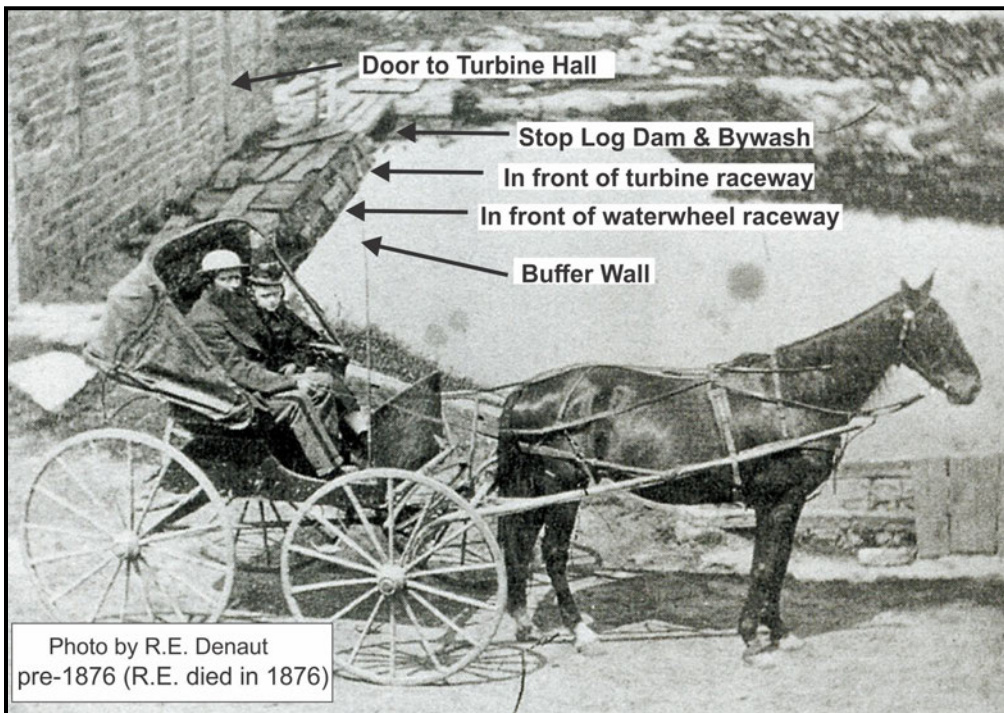


Walter H. Denaut

DMS photo archives, photographer and date unknown.

“cantering horses through the public streets.” They were acquitted and Denaut must have redeemed himself since he was appointed a special constable in Brockville in 1833. There is conflicting information on exactly what Denaut did prior to moving back to Delta. Some information shows him involved with Dr. Elnathan Hubbell, who built a grist mill in Brockville in the 1830s (later owned by James L. Schofield). Others have him partnering with James Crawford who was involved with the construction of the Beauharnois Canal (opened 1843) and the Galop Canal (opened in 1845).

One source has him moving to Beverley (Delta) in 1839 which perhaps conflicts a bit with the anecdotal story of his involvement with Crawford and canal building. But he is certainly in Delta in the 1840s, operating a general store and



First Photo of the Mill—c.early 1870s

This is the first image we have of the mill. It shows several features including the buffer wall protecting the north face of the mill. A stop log dam in front of the bywash controlled the level of the mill pond. That level of the pond in this photo is the level of Upper Beverley Lake today. The mill closed in 1960 and in 1962, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) built a new stop log dam upstream of the road bridge and removed the mill's stop log dam. They also removed part of the buffer wall at that time with the remaining part removed during later mill restoration. The people in the photo have not been positively identified. Photo by Roderick Denaut (Walter's son), pre-1876.

starting to purchase properties in Delta. In 1844 he married Julia Easton (b.1821). In 1849 he built a palatial house in Delta, known today as the Denaut Mansion. In February 1850, he purchased the Old Stone Mill from the Macdonells and paid off the three mortgages on the mill. The 1851 census give us a sense of the state of the mill. In that census it shows "W.H. Denaut, Merchant". It notes that he owned "1 Grist Mill, unfinished or under repair. 1 run of stones in operation by water power. Will cost when finished £2,600. Producer for the last year £250". So it wasn't making much money but clearly Denaut was planning to put a great deal of money into fixing up and improving the mill.

The 1851 census shows that he also owned 320 acres of agricultural land with 60 under cultivation, 30 for crops and 30 for pasture. In crops he only had 2 acres of wheat, producing 25 bushels, and 2 acres of potatoes, producing 66 bushels. In terms of animals he had 1 bull or ox, 3 milk cows, 2 calves, 17 horses, 9 sheep and 14 pigs. An 1851 directory shows W.H. Denaut as a general merchant with grist, saw, and carding mills. An early (1817) reference to the mill shows that there was a carding machine in the sawmill so yarn making was always part of the business. We see him with the same listing in the 1857-58 directory with the added note that he was also the postmaster.

Denaut, in addition to his clear business acumen, took over the mill at a good time. Wheat production in the region was increasing as was the demand for flour. We don't know exactly what improvements Denaut made in the 1850s but in that period he built a community hall adjacent to the mill. It was built with a stone carriage shed foundation designed to support a very impressive brick hall upper storey. Denaut appears to have liked brick, the servants quarters on the Denaut Mansion were constructed of brick and at some point, perhaps in the 1850s, he replaced the original wooden headers over all the windows and doors in the Old Stone Mill with brick.

Our next snapshot of the mill is 1861 where the census that year indicated that Denaut put \$20,000 of improvements into the mill. That was a huge sum of money and it has been interpreted that the work involved converting the mill from waterwheel to turbine power and the power transmission from direct connect wooden gearing to belt and pulley technology. We are fortunate that he decided to situate the turbines in an addition onto the mill, the turbine hall, leaving the original 1810 mill, including the original waterwheel raceway, fully intact. Columns within the mill were moved to accommodate the new method of distributing power (we refer to them today as "Denaut columns").

Turbines were a new technology, Denaut used a pair of Swain turbines, designed in



Count the Denauts

This c.1861 map of Delta shows many of Walter H. Denaut's holdings, including the Old Stone Mill and the magnificent brick upper storey Denaut Hall. H.F. Walling's Historical Atlas of Leeds & Grenville, 1861-62.

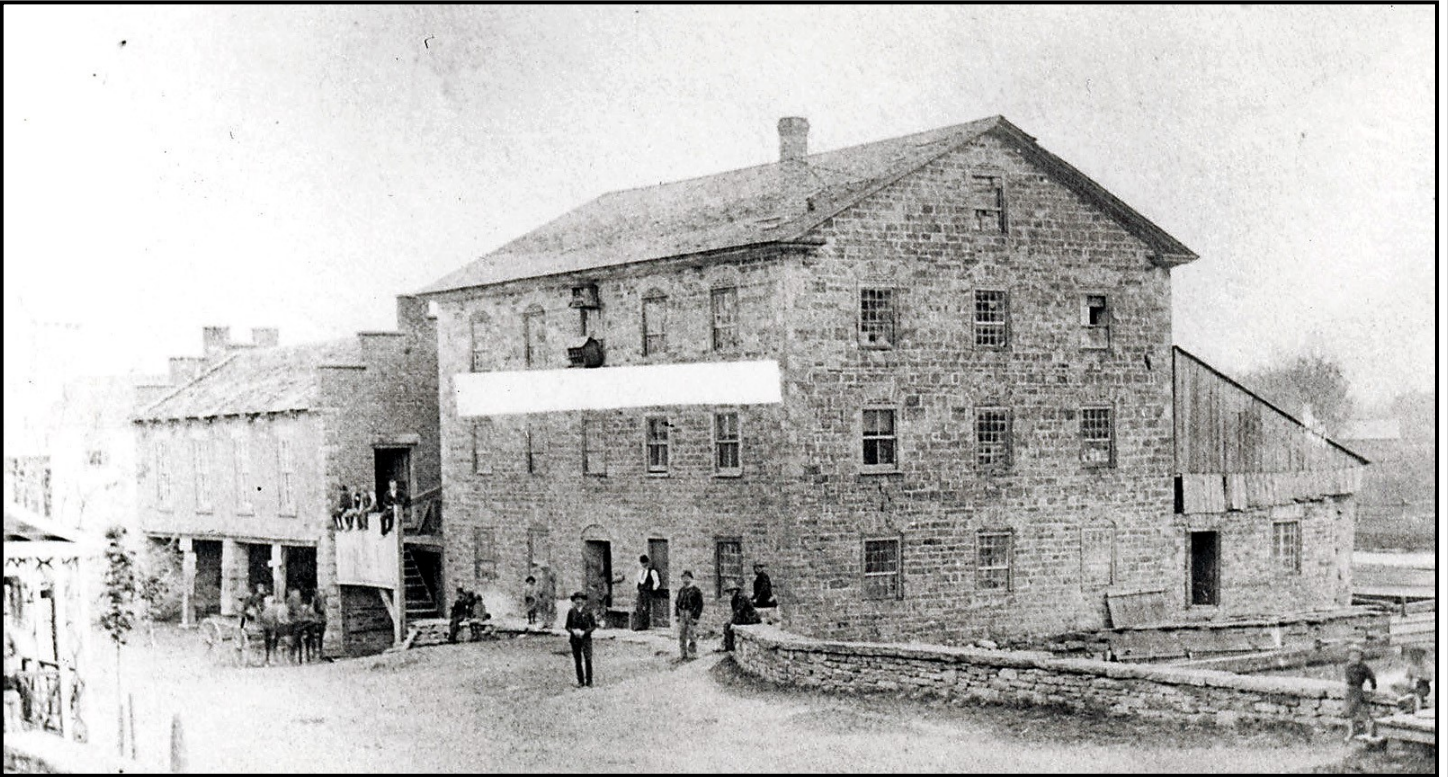
1855, a rare example of the use of this type of turbine (perhaps on the only ones in Ontario). They were much more efficient than a waterwheel. A calculation by William Trick in 1996 shows that each turbine could produce about 35 HP running at 75 RPM with a 7 foot head of water. We don't have figures for the original breastshot waterwheel, but each turbine provided at least the same, if not more power than originally was generated by the waterwheel.



Barrel Head Stencil

This is the stencil Denaut used for his flour barrels. In Denaut's time only fine flour could be exported. The legal requirement was a barrel that contained 196 pounds of "superfine" flour.





The Mill c.1880

This is the first full view we have of the mill. Adjacent to it is Denaut Hall. The white bar is in the original copy, likely meant as a caption space. We can see all the features of the mill including the buffer wall and stop log dam. Of interest are the three 2 over 2 pane windows, which Walter used for his new (c.1850s) second floor office, presumably since they allowed for a better view than the original 12 over 8 pane windows. Today we call his 2nd floor office the "Miller's Room" and have it displayed as it might have looked in the 1860s. Note the two birdhouses above the caption bar. We still have one of those birdhouses in our collection. DMS Photo Archives, photographer unknown, c.1880.



Millstone Crane

This crane, which we have in our Dressing the Millstone display, was in use in the mill during Denaut's time. It has some signatures on it, including that of Denaut's miller, Walter Bush. Check it out when you visit the mill. Photo by Ken.

The Old Stone Mill is a rarity in that it shows large transitions in technology through its operating lifetime. It was built in an era when the power source was a waterwheel and that rotational power was distributed to machines throughout the building using direct connection wooden gearing. Belt and pulley technology started to come into use in mills in Canada the 1840s and cast iron turbines were also developed at that time. Denaut made that transition in the mill in the early 1860s. Denaut clearly saw the economic advantage in moving to new, more efficient technologies, the change to turbines and belts and pulleys was a mammoth undertaking and huge capital investment.

Another change made by Denaut, once the waterwheel had been removed, was to extend the husk, the foundation for the millstones, over the waterwheel pit area so that a set of stones could be located closer to the turbines. While the millstones were powered by gearing coming directly off the turbines, two slits in the west wall of the original mill (still in place today) allowed a belt from the upper turbine to power a vertical shaft that provided rotational power to machinery on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

During Walter Denaut's ownership, the Old Stone Mill was known as Denaut's Mill. He had several employees, and early on we see Walter Bush as the miller. Bush left Delta (went to the U.S.) in 1867 and after that we see Charles (Charlie) VanLuven as the miller. In addition to the millers, he had labourers and millwrights, usually 3 to 4 employees at any given time. At some point, perhaps

as early as the 1850s, Denaut converted part of the 2nd floor into his private office, today's Miller's Room. It was beautifully done with a plastered interior and "modern" 2 over 2 pane windows replacing the original 12 over 8 pane windows. In addition to clearly being a horse lover (the 17 horses shown in the 1851 census), he apparently liked birds, since the earliest photo we have of the front of the mill (c.1880) shows two birdhouses affixed to the middle window on the 3rd floor.

In Walling's map of Delta, published in 1861, we see Denaut owning 6 houses in Delta, with 4 showing as tenant houses. He also owned a hotel, a store (likely 2), a warehouse, a hall and of course, a grist mill. He was clearly the dominant force in the village. The magnificent looking brick hall, located adjacent to the mill, served as a space for town hall meetings, concerts and dances, and as a court house. Its use diminished somewhat after the building of the Old Town Hall in 1879/80.

In his personal life, he had 4 children with Julia Easton; sons Roderick Easton (1845-1876), George Crawford (1847-1874), Walter Henderson (1850-1903) and a daughter, Julia Easton (1854-1928). His wife Julia died in 1855. While there is conflicting genealogical information, it appears he married Harriet Jones of Brookfield, Connecticut, perhaps in 1856. She died on July 30, 1858. On May 17, 1859, he married Caroline Amelia Dunham (1832-1907) of Brockville and they had seven children, Erastus (1860-1861), Edward D. (1861-1862), Matthew Stevenson (1863-1928), Caroline Elizabeth (1866-1947), Henry Duncan (1867-1904), Sarah (1869-1937) and James Lancaster (1870-1952).

The mill appears to have been a continued success for Denaut. In 1861, the mill produced 6,000 barrels of flour for sale. That would have been "superfine" flour, the only type of flour allowed for export at that time in standard barrels

containing 196 pounds of flour. Like millers before him, Denaut was selling the coarser components of the flour (coarse middling, shorts and bran) to local farmers as animal feed and perhaps even using it himself for his own livestock. This was early days for animal feed, the purpose manufacturing of animal feed started in the late 1800s. But Denaut may have



Carolyn Amelia Dunham Denaut
DMS Photo Archives, photographer and date unknown.

looked at this as another source of revenue, particularly as the flour market became more difficult for small mills in the 1880s with the import of western grain and the introduction of factory flour mills (using roller mills).

Denaut also had a revenue stream from his sawmill and carding mill. It is this diversification, plus his various rental and retail assets in Delta that ensured his continued success. Walter Denaut died on March 16, 1889 at the age of 81 ½.

Delta, March 19 [1889] – The oldest resident of Delta, Walter H. Denaut, died on Friday last. A very large crowd collected to pay respects to his remains and to his afflicted family. The town hall was appropriated for the funeral service, the churches being too small to accommodate all. The hall was draped in black. Rev. Mr. Howard, of Elgin, preached the sermon. Four other clergymen assisted with the service. A special train brought out a number of sympathizing friends and relatives from Brockville to assist at the funeral.

Ownership of the mill went to Walter's wife, Caroline, and their son, James L. Denaut, operated the mill until its sale in 1893 (after which he moved to the U.S. and became a doctor). On October 5, 1893, Caroline sold the Old Stone Mill to George Haskin, ushering a new era for the Old Stone Mill, to be continued in the next newsletter.

- Ken Watson



Walter's Headstone

Robertson Cemetery, Delta.
Photo by Ken

History of the Mill Part 3 – Haskin and Steele eras

On October 5, 1893, Caroline Denaut sold the Old Stone Mill to George Haskin ushering in a new era for the mill. George was born in Philipsville in 1854. His father, Solomon Haskin, was a millwright and George followed in his father's footsteps, working for several years at a mill in Westport. By the time Haskin purchased the Old Stone Mill it was getting tougher for small mills which were now being outcompeted by factory mills. This was mainly due to the introduction of the modern roller mill in the late 1870s and every increasing amounts of western wheat being railed to eastern Canada.

Roller mills were a game changer for the flour industry. Small, compact and very efficient at producing fine flour, they allowed the creation of factories running hundreds of these to mass produce flour. They were also an advantage in any gristmill, with millers abandoning millstones in favour of roller mills. While the records are unclear, it is likely that Haskin introduced a roller mill into the Old Stone Mill to replace the old millstones. We have some evidence for this in the fact that photos from that time show French burrstones outside the mill, presumably being offered for sale.

Haskin did several other things including building the house between the Old Stone Mill and the Old Town Hall, later occupied by Hastings Steele. This allowed Haskin to live adjacent to the mill, keeping a close eye on his operations there. The sawmill was a significant source of revenue for Haskin, supplying the local market with sawn wood. In



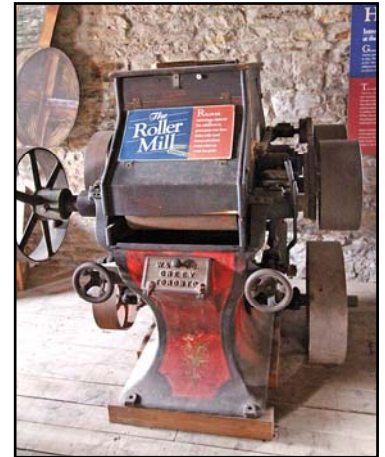
Old Stone Mill c.1906

This painting of the Old Stone Mill shows the very large steam stack rising above the roof of the turbine hall. This was painted by Hazel Horton, who according to anecdotal history was 14 at the time (making it 1906). The story goes that she painted it from a canoe in the mill stream. DMS Digital Archives



Hazel Horton?

This is reportedly Hazel in the canoe. In the background is the mill with the steam stack. Hazel was born on March 7, 1892 and married Charles Chant. DMS Digital Archives.



Roller Mill

On display in the turbine hall, this roller mill is not original to the Old Stone Mill (this one is from the Bellrock Mill) but it is very similar to what Haskin would have had in the Old Stone Mill.



French Burrstones

In this crop of a c.1900 photo, French burrstones are outside the mill. No longer needed, Haskin is presumably selling them. DMS Digital Archives

In 1899 Haskin added a brickyard on the mill property which in 1900 he leased to William Chase. Chase operated it for several years.

Most interestingly, and a bit of a mystery today, was Haskin's installation of a steam boiler in 1899. The boiler was located in the turbine hall and photos from that era show the very large steam stack extending far above the roof the Old Stone Mill.

Why he installed it is not a mystery, starting in the 1870s or so, many places in the region were converting to steam, including cheese factories and sawmills. Prior to the steam engine, the Old Stone Mill was dependent on a flow of water to run the turbines which powered the mill's machinery. This meant that the mill had to shut down in times of low to no water flow, often from early summer to the fall. A steam boiler simply needed a supply of water, it didn't need a flow of water. It could operate the mill at any time of year. The mystery is why it was removed, it only lasted until the early 1900s. Later photos of the mill show no steam stack.

Although the records are scant, by all accounts Haskin had a successful operation until he sold the mill on March 14, 1913 to a partnership of Hastings Steele and Steele's brother in-law James Huffman for the sum of \$8,000.

Hastings Steele was born on April 17, 1879 in Westport. Prior to purchasing the Old Stone Mill, Hastings operated the gristmill in Lyn, so he was well familiar with how to run a mill. His partnership with his brother-in-law lasted less than a year, it was dissolved on March 4, 1914. There are various stories regarding how this was done, a plausible one is that they held a private auction with Steele outbidding Huffman. Steele formed a new business partnership with Omer P. Arnold which continued until 1921.

To keep the mill in business Steele diversified. The sawmill was still profitable as was the animal feed business, but by 1917 we see that he's selling commercial flour (Purity Flour) as well as getting involved in the electrical business. There are various stories about the Old Stone Mill making electrical power under both Haskin and Steele.

However most of those stories are problematic in that there was little surplus water power given the low water head at Delta. We do know that in late 1911, George Roddick, the miller in Lyndhurst, installed a dynamo in his mill. Lyndhurst had at least three times the water power of Delta and Roddick extended power lines from Lyndhurst to Delta and was supplying electricity to both communities. Steele did get involved as an electrical contractor, by September 1929 he was selling and installing electrical equipment in area homes, allowing them to get hooked to the grid. That year Ontario Hydro bought out Roddick and shut down his dynamo as they worked to connect people to their power grid. Steele at that time may have installed a small dynamo in the Old Stone Mill to keep the lights on in a few houses (including his own). By 1930 Ontario Hydro was hooking up all the local villages to the main power grid, the short era of local mills producing electrical power was over.

In 1922 Steele made a significant change to the mill, lowering the husk (the wooden support foundation for the heavy millstones) to the level of the main floor to make it easier for his main business at the time, making animal feed. In 1923 he purchased a Champion Grinder, installing it in this area. We still have this grinder on display in the mill.

Also in the 1920s, he sold the adjacent building, Denaut Hall. The hall was designed as a brick community hall with a carriage shed at ground level. The new owners repurposed the carriage shed as a garage, pouring a cement slab floor and installing a forge. Garages of the era included a blacksmith to work on various types of vehicles (both gas and horse powered).

Over the years we see Steele changing from a production facility to a merchant facility with milling stopping by the early 1940s. In addition to selling commercially made flour, variously Purity, White Rose and Robin Hood, he also started selling commercial animal feed (Blanchard's Feed). From 1938 to 1952 he also operated an electrical supply store from the mill.

In 1960, with Hastings now in his 80s and the mill 150 years old, he closed the mill. In 1961, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) took over water control, acquiring the mill stream, bywash and turbine hall. Up to that point, it had been the miller who controlled the level of his millpond, which was Upper Beverley Lake (dam raised from the original two smaller lakes that existed prior to mill damming). The level of the lake was controlled by a stoplog dam at the head of the bywash adjacent to the mill. MNR, in addition to wanting to maintain the level of Upper Beverley Lake for residents, also wanted to ensure flood control, since Delta had seen flooding over the years with flood waters flowing down Recreation



A Young Hastings Steele

DMS Digital Archives



Hastings Steele's House

Reportedly built by George Haskin, this is the house that Hastings Steele lived in. The lower photo is looking over the mill pond from the mill towards the house (you can just see the Old Town Hall on the right). The house suffered from a severe fire (March 5, 1996) and the remains had to be torn down. Top photo by Robert Dent, Bottom, DMS Digital Archives.



Flooding 1930s

Delta has flooded many times with the waters from Upper Beverley Lake following the path of the original stream, going down Recreation Drive and across King Street by the DMS Blacksmiths Shop. The car in the middle of this photo is on top of the old stream channel which was filled in during the building of the Old Stone Mill in 1810-11. The Old Stone Mill has engineered flood control, it has never flooded (see "Building the 1810 Mill" on the History Page of our website). DMS Digital Archives

Drive, which is located on top of the original stream channel. In 1962, MNR built a new stoplog dam just upstream of the bridge, the dam that controls the water levels to this day.

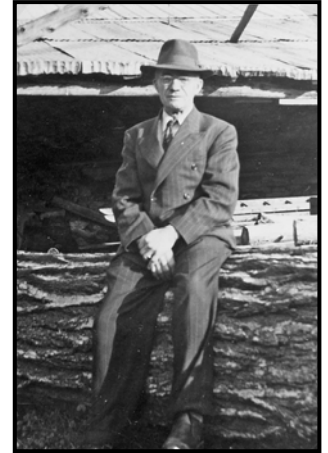
Hastings was left with just the mill which was in rough shape. But it represented an important part of Delta and regional history, it was a survivor of a now bygone age and Hastings didn't want to see it torn down. In 1963 he struck a deal with four individuals, transferring ownership of the mill to them with the intent that they maintain the mill as a museum of milling technology. These four trustees were the start of the Delta Mill Society whose story will be told in the next newsletter.

- Ken Watson

Author's note: doing research for this article involved genealogical research, including looking at census data.

As is often the case, either the enumerator or a later

transcriber of the census got the name wrong. The name Steele clearly posed challenges. In the 1891 census he's shown as Hastings Slegee, in 1901 he's Hastings Steel, in 1911 he's Hastings Stule (that's a transcription error although the handwriting does look like Stule), in 1921 he's Harting Stul (another transcription error, again due to bad handwriting on the part of the enumerator) but by 1931 he's correctly shown as Hastings L. Steele.



Hastings Steele c.1946

This shows Hastings sitting on a large tree trunk in front of the sawmill which was located above the bywash and attached to the turbine hall of the Old Stone Mill. DMS Digital Archives



The Old Stone Mill – 1950s, 1972 & Today

On the left, this photo from the 1950s shows a customer's wagon being loaded with a bag of animal feed. You can see the sign for "Blanchard's Feeds" on the front of the mill. The second photo, taken in 1972 before rescue restoration began, shows the sorry state of the mill. In this photo the sawmill, which had been located above the bywash has been removed (the floor collapsed in the 1960s and MNR removed the structure). You can see the cracking in the walls. During the main restoration phase (1999-2003) it was determined that the wall visible in this photo (south wall) was actually bowed out by over 2 feet. In the third photo, the main door, which is the original 1810 door of the mill, still shows the Steele name. We all owe a debt to Steele for his desire to preserve the mill and finding a group of people willing to do that, the four trustees who founded the Delta Mill Society. DMS Digital Archives.

History of the Mill Part 4 – The Delta Mill Society's Early Years



This early 1960s photo of the mill shows one of the many problems, a crack extending almost bottom to top along the south wall of the mill.

In 1960, mill owner Hastings Steele closed the mill. At this point he was just operating it as a store – flour, feed and saw milling had ceased prior to that. As recounted in our Fall 2024 newsletter, in 1961 the Ministry of Natural Resources took over water control, acquiring ownership of the mill pond, bywash and turbine hall. In 1962 they built a stoplog dam upstream of the bridge, removing water control from the mill. In 1963 they demolished the old stone bridge (built c.1870) and replaced it with the current concrete bridge.

Hastings, who lived in a house (since demolished) just across the millpond from the mill, was now left with just the mill which was in rough shape. There were some in Delta who considered it an eyesore and wanted it torn down. But it represented an important part of Delta and Canadian national history, it was a survivor of a now bygone age and Hastings didn't want to see it torn down. A small group of individuals started to talk with Hastings about how to save the mill. Hastings had a vision of the mill as a museum of milling technology, something that would show future generations what the mill represented in the eras it operated.

A deal was reached in 1963 and on August 28 Hastings signed the deed for the mill over to four trustees; Elizabeth Robinson, Mildred Sweet, Albert Frye and Robert Tuck. They formed the initial core of the Delta Mill Society. It's to be noted that not all these trustees were local to Delta. Then, as now, the Delta Mill Society has attracted heritage people from outside of Delta due to the national significance of the mill to Canada.

We have a minute book from 1964 which shows that dozens of volunteers were now involved in helping to save the mill. The Society held its first public meeting in September 1964. It started off with the singing of our national anthem and then moved on to presentations and

business. The business was to form working committees, including restoration, finance, area park, publicity & research, and museum. Several of the names on those committees will be familiar to those in Delta today; Gray, Russell, Halladay, Morris, Laforty, Green, Coon, and many more – over 40 names show up on these committees.

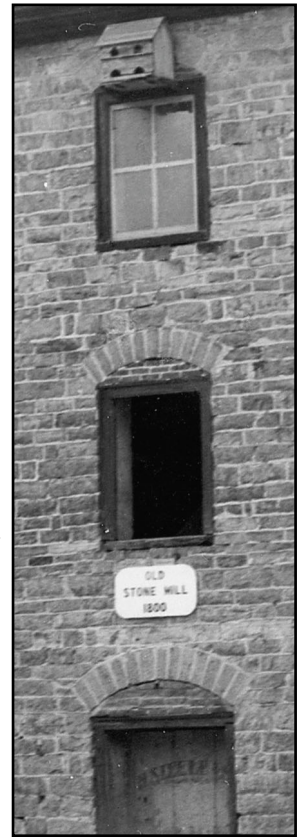
The Delta Mill Society had already reached out to Douglas R. Hough, Curator of Buildings and Machinery at Upper Canada Village, for professional advice on how to restore the building. Hough's October 1964 Phase 1 plan had 8 steps, and it indicated the poor condition of the mill. It included items such as strengthening the foundation, using steel rods and plates to prevent the walls from buckling and rebuilding the arches over the tailraces. He also noted the "urgent need" for a new roof using heavy duty cedar shingles as well as the need to fix all the windows.

To follow Hough's recommendations was going to be expensive and the issue became financing but with Canada's Centennial coming up there was a potential opportunity for a Centennial Grant which was one of the September 1964 presentations. The Township of Bastard and South-Burgess was also involved and although they didn't offer any money, there

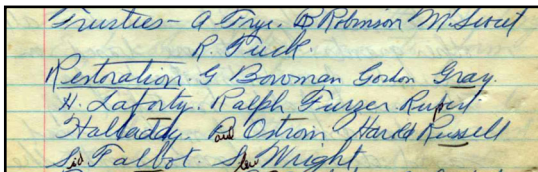
were council members on all the committees, and the township hosted several of the committee meetings.

Getting financial support was a main theme in this period as was the work that needed to be done.

While the DMS back then was volunteer rich, it was cash poor. In July 1965, an appraiser



In this crop of a c.1970 photo, the brick tympanums over the 2 x 2 pane windows can be seen as well as the birdhouse (which we still have). We also see that the DMS believed at this time that the mill had been built in 1800.



An extract from the 1964 minute book showing the trustees and the members restoration committee.

estimated restoration costs would be \$17,000 (\$170,000 in 2025\$). It was noted that this shut down the whole restoration project since township council was not interested and Centennial funding (which would have come via the township) was never received. Finances continued to be tight, in the early 1970s the DMS's bank balance was \$400 – the DMS was still struggling to find funding. During this period the four trustees continued to hold title to the mill while work was done to find a solution to the financial issue. But finances didn't hold the DMS back from moving forward.

National Historic Site Status

A momentous accomplishment of the DMS in this early period was obtaining National Historic Site (NHS) status for the Old Stone Mill. NHS status is not easy to come by, it must be shown that a heritage site has national significance. The only other NHS in the Township of Rideau Lakes is the Rideau Canal. Work towards this started in the mid-1960s, with the

Commemorative Integrity Statement for the Old Stone Mill written in January 1969 and NHS designation being given in February 1970 by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC). The mill received its plaque in a public



This mid-1960s photo of the west side of the mill shows the sorry state of the turbine hall and the rusting galvanized steel roof of the mill. The sawmill, which was attached to the mill, has been mostly removed by this time, just a bit of the flooring remained.

ceremony in 1973.



National pride was on display as an audience, in the area of today's Millstream Park, listened to speeches during the July 21, 1973 NHS plaquing of the Old Stone Mill. A portion of the first floor of the mill was opened to the public on that day.

ceremony in 1973.

In a nutshell, the NHS status was awarded to the mill since it is: a) one of the oldest surviving mills in Ontario; b) a fine example of early Canadian architecture and c) a reminder of the pioneer industrial development of eastern Ontario. There is a lot more in the details of the HSMBC minutes. The mill is the only surviving pre-

1812 stone mill in Ontario, an architectural gem that speaks directly to the pioneer development of Eastern Ontario. We maintain the mill in a state of "Commemorative Integrity" which is a moral requirement of NHS status. It is to be noted that NHS status does not mean federal funding for the mill. That remains a significant issue in Canada since privately owned NHSs have no pool of funding they can tap into, with the sole exception of the Parks Canada cost sharing program for restoration work which will be described in the next newsletter.

As a brief aside, NHS designation is based on the HSMBC minutes – so our designation date is 1970. But you'll see 1973 in some spots, since our plaquing ceremony was held in 1973. Plaquing is not designation, but it is quite commonly confused as a designation date. As a further aside, our youngest board member, Jared Hayes, did his Masters of History thesis on the early years of the Delta Mill Society. Part of his research involved digging up the HSMBC minutes which had been signed by Dr. Christina Cameron. Since I happen to know Dr. Cameron from my volunteer work on the Rideau Canal (her career was with Parks Canada), I was able to invite her over to the mill in 2020 to meet Jared. I also



This photo taken in the fall of 1972 shows scaffolding going up on the south side of the mill as repairs were started. Note the cemented in turbine hall tailrace. It was supported at the bottom by a large iron beam. Turbine tailraces do have to be partially sealed (originally with wood) to force the water through the turbines, but this cement work indicates the failure of the stone arch that originally supported the stonework above it.

At that time we see the first official board of the newly incorporated DMS with Dr. Robert Tuck, President; Harold Russell, Vice-President; Mildred Sweet, Treasurer; Myrla Saunders, Recording Secretary; Elizabeth Robinson, Corresponding Secretary; Richard Ussher, Comptroller; and general directors Albert Frye, Howard Jones, and Ronald White.

In the fall of 1972, scaffolding went up on the side of the mill as rescue work began. The initial work was to stabilize the building, including shoring up the main floor supports (under the mill). Tie rods were installed to keep the walls intact. With the building stabilized, additional restoration work continued through to 1974 and included replacing the galvanized sheet metal roof with cedar shingles and replacing the 2 over 2 pane windows (a change to the original mill windows that started in the 1850s) with the original 1810 design of 12 over 8 pane windows. The brick tympanums above the window lintels, which had been done by Walter Denaut in the 1850s, were replaced with wooden ones (except for a couple above the doors in the south wall). The turbine raceway exit (tailrace arch) which had been sealed by concrete was opened and the arch rebuilt. Details are scant since we have poor documentation of this work, few records of this work are in the present day DMS files.

Also in this period, MNR reinforced the bywash with concrete to stabilize it as the water bypass, a role it continues to play to this day. Although the records are fragmented, it appears that the DMS did about \$35,000 (\$230,000 2025\$) of work in the 1972-74 period. It was noted in 1974 that \$10,000 (\$55,000 2025\$) of work still needed to be done. In 1978 the DMS borrowed \$2,000 (\$9,000 2025\$) to do stonework safety repairs. Work continued as dollars and volunteers permitted.

asked her about the mill's 50 foot long ridgepole (Dr. Cameron was Chair of Built Heritage at McGill University at the time), but 1810 mill construction is not one of her areas of expertise, so it remains a bit of a mystery in terms of how exactly they installed it.

Incorporation & Rescue Rehabilitation

On August 17, 1972 the Delta Mill Society was incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization. On September 5, 1972, the four trustees deeded the mill over to the newly incorporated society. This allowed rehabilitation to begin. At this time, MNR, who still owned the Turbine Hall, deeded it to the Delta Mill Society based on the heritage work planned for the mill. Our NHS designation already included the Turbine Hall.

The 1972 incorporated objects of the association (the legal mandate) were:

TO preserve as an historic landmark the old stone mill at the village of Delta, in the said United Counties of Leeds and Grenville; to promote interest in the historical development of the Delta mill; to provide a suitable repository for irreplaceable objects marking the historical development of the Delta mill; and subject to the Mortmain and Charitable Uses Act and the Charitable Gifts Act, to accept donations, gifts, grants, legacies and bequests.

"I am delighted to hear of your efforts and those of the citizens of Delta to restore your historic stone mill built in the year 1800. Efforts such as yours will help Canadians preserve the precious heritage of our past."

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

"I appreciate your efforts for the preservation of historic sites in this fast moving world of to-day. If strong local representation is made and a fund-raising campaign is sponsored by the community, the Heritage Foundation may make a donation to the campaign."

William Davis

Fundraising

Fundraising in the early 1970s included obtaining statements of support. While not much happened in terms of government help, donor support from this fundraising campaign did allow rescue restoration to begin in 1972. At that time the DMS thought the mill was built in 1800, hence that reference in P.E.T.s statement.

In 1978 the Mill was designated under the Ontario Heritage Act. That designation is very architecture centric and is quite dated (several errors of fact) so we don't promote it. Our NHS designation is much more significant and accurate in terms of facts (although it too has a few errors).

This ends History of the Mill Part 4. Part 5 (next newsletter) will begin with a portion of the mill opening to the public for a full season in 1985. In 1986 an opportunity came along to do a proper restoration of the mill which is a big story all on its own.

- Ken Watson

History of the Mill Mythology

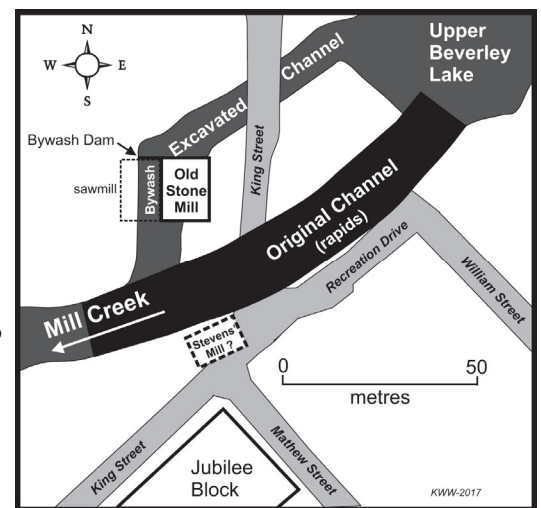
In the previous article about the early Delta Mill Society, it was noted that much of the mill's history at that time was incorrect. This is because the DMS at that time relied on local lore, anecdotal history that was generally wrong. Delta, like any small village (or quite frankly any human settlement on earth) is full of incorrect anecdotal history. Human memory is faulty and our brains don't like information gaps, so it makes things up which we later perceive as real memories. Even first-hand accounts are often incorrect, particularly when the person recounts it years later (as we see in books such as Leavitt's 1879 "History of Leeds and Grenville Ontario" which is full of errors). Anecdotal history has this problem as well as a problem with people putting the wrong things together (the 2+2=5 problem which exists with much anecdotal history).

So, just a few examples related to the Old Stone Mill that the early DMS in some cases thought as being facts. The biggest one is the mistaken belief that the Old Stone Mill was built on the site of the original Stevens' grist mill – it wasn't. That it was built in 2 stages with the upper storey built later is also incorrect. That the Old Stone Mill dam created Upper Beverley Lake and flooded 2,000 acres of farmland. It didn't, the quick fact check was to measure the size of the lake which is 1,350 acres. It's actually a bit higher today than it was in the past with the 1962 MNR dam. Upper Beverley Lake was originally 2 smaller lakes, enlarged by Abel Stevens' c.1796 dams and then further enlarged by the Old Stone Mill's 1810 dam. The actual flooding number attributable to the Old Stone Mill is closer to 700 acres, most of that pre-existing swampland, not farmland. That John Beverley Robinson funded the 3rd floor construction (he didn't). That the mill had no adjacent dam (it did, we have photographic evidence dating back to the 1870s plus the physical landscape today that says it did in 1810-11). That Jasper Russell and Isaac Whaley were two of the masons who worked on the mill – they weren't. The list goes on and on.

I've detailed a few of these in the Mill's interpretation guide which you can download from our website – see the "History – A Cautionary Tale" section. The most accurate story of the building of the mill, as we presently know it, is also detailed in my book "Building the 1810 Old Stone Mill in Delta Ontario", 2nd edition written in 2022, with a printed version available for sale in our mill shop and a PDF version available as a free download from our website. Wade Ranford's 2006 book, "A History of Grist Milling in Delta", which also debunked several myths and provided the first accurate chronology of the mill, is also available for sale in our mill shop and as a free download from our website.

These myths about the mill were all prevalent during the early DMS period since that's what local lore said and many people take local lore at face value. Historians generally know better (not all), but as a scientist and a heritage researcher (and family genealogist), I take a different approach to history which is to fact-check everything.

I've noted the fact check about Upper Beverley Lake (to measure the size of the lake to debunk the anecdotal tale—I also did a bathymetric survey of the lake to prove that the old (1794-95) maps were correct), but another good example



The original Stevens mills were located adjacent to the original rapids. The rapids were buried in 1810-11 with the material excavated from the new water channel that was built to the Old Stone Mill.

is the Russell/Whaley as mill masons story, which was printed in a 1950s newspaper article and has its origins (best that I can figure) in the mistaken assumption that the stone bridge in Delta, which was replaced in 1963 by the current bridge, dated back to the building of the Old Stone Mill. It didn't, that bridge, which many in Delta will still remember, was built no earlier than the late 1860s. Initial fact checking included a bit of genealogical research into Russell (born 1815) and Whaley (born 1809/10) which clearly showed they couldn't have been masons in 1810. But they certainly could have been masons c.1870 when the stone bridge was built (replacing an earlier stone/wooden bridge). If you assumed the stone bridge was built at the same time as the Old Stone Mill and had information that Whaley and Russell were masons who built that bridge (I've never researched that and so I don't know if that is true), then the erroneous conclusion is that they were masons that also worked on the mill which is an assumption piled on an assumption. It's a very typical example of how anecdotal history is generally wrong – it may have its roots in some facts, but ends up with a completely incorrect set of assumptions to build the anecdotal tale.



A c.1960 photo of Delta's stone bridge. This bridge was built in about 1870 and it was demolished in 1963 after the new dam was built just upstream in 1962. The Old Stone Mill is visible in the background. The small opening in the bridge only allowed a maximum flow of water that could be handled by the mill's bywash, ensuring that the first floor of the mill, where flour was packed, stayed dry. The level of the water in the foreground (level of Upper Beverley Lake) was at that time the level of water against the side of the mill (the millpond).

The real problem with this for the DMS in terms of presenting accurate fact based history, is that while we (humans) are really good at learning new things (big brains), once an idea gets into our head (true or false), it is hard to get rid of. So it's much easier for us to accept new facts than to debunk embedded "facts" that are incorrect. It also takes a lot more proof to convince people and even then, you're not going to convince them all. In my heritage work, it takes me far more time to debunk a mythological "fact" than it does to document a new fact. A classic one for instance on the Rideau Canal is the myth that workers who died during the construction of the canal were buried in unmarked graves. They weren't, funerals were held and graves marked, but I still see that incorrect "fact" being repeated to this day.

With the DMS, things started to slowly change in the 1990s with more high-quality research being done including archaeology and conservation work research. A real milestone was Wade Ranford's work in the early 2000s, which sorted out the mill's chronology, including debunking many anecdotal tales with facts. Wade didn't get it all right, but it was a huge leap forward in our factual understanding of the history of mill. We will never figure it all out, there will always be mysteries surrounding the mill (such as the name of the millwright who actually designed and built it), which is part of the fun of doing heritage research. But as time goes on, anecdotal tales about the mill are being replaced with fact-based history – a goal in all the heritage research that I do.

- Ken Watson